

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1-7. (Cancelled)

8. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 23, wherein said reply message processing means further automatically determines a topic to which the reply message should belong.

9-15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 26, wherein the reply message processing step includes further automatically determining a topic to which the reply message should belong.

17-21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a client terminal via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from the client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities

comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of the client terminal so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

message subscription type setting means for setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user;

community processing means for managing the plurality of virtual communities, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual communities, from the client terminal, the client terminal being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, said community processing means including:

reply message processing means for, when a reply email message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email message comprising a header, subject, and a message text, delivering the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, determining whether or not the header of the reply email message includes an ID, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message based on whether the header of the reply email message includes the ID; and

a processor for implementing at least the message subscription type setting means, wherein:

the ID comprises a message ID and a thread ID, and

~~A system according to claim 21, wherein the reply message processing means categorizes and accumulates the reply message based on the message ID and the thread ID if it is determined that the header of the reply email message includes the message ID and the thread ID, and based on a community name and assigned number included in the subject of the reply email message if it is determined that the header of the reply email message does not include the message ID and the thread ID.~~

23. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 22, wherein the client terminal displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing the user to post the reply email message to the second virtual community by replying to a new posting.

24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently Amended) A reply message processing method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a client terminal via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from the client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the

plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, comprising:

an access control step of making user authentication of the client terminal so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

a community processing step of managing the plurality of virtual communities, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual communities, from the client terminal, the client terminal being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a reply message processing step of, when a reply email message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email message comprising a header, subject, and a message text, delivering the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, determining whether or not the header of the reply email message includes an ID, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message based on whether the header of the reply email message includes the ID, wherein:

the ID comprises a message ID and a thread ID, and

~~A method according to claim 24, wherein~~ the reply message processing step categorizes and accumulates the reply message based on the message ID and the thread ID if it is determined that the header of the reply email message includes the message ID and the thread ID, and based on a community name and assigned number included in the subject of the reply email message if it is determined that the header of the reply email message does not include the message ID and the thread ID.

26. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 25, wherein the client terminal displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing the user to post the reply email message to the second virtual community by replying to a new posting.